

**There's
no such
thing as
a baby,
she says**

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Lili Huston-Herterich
0948416

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Writing Tutor: **Kate Briggs**
Core Tutors: **Liesbeth Bik & Katarina Zdjelar**
Course Director: **Vivian Sky Rehberg**

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INTRODUCTION

“There is no such thing as a baby” (Briggs 2019), meaning a baby is never alone. I think about “baby” and its relationship to beginnings, and also its dependency on “mother”. Could this project be about origins? This is a collection of texts written towards the questions of *who and what I am with* and *where these things come from*. It considers the context and interdependence of my practice on multiple levels: with ideas, people, materials, methods, history, and inheritance. “We inherit the reachability of some objects”, and the specificity of our orientation “puts certain things within reach” (Ahmed, 2007).

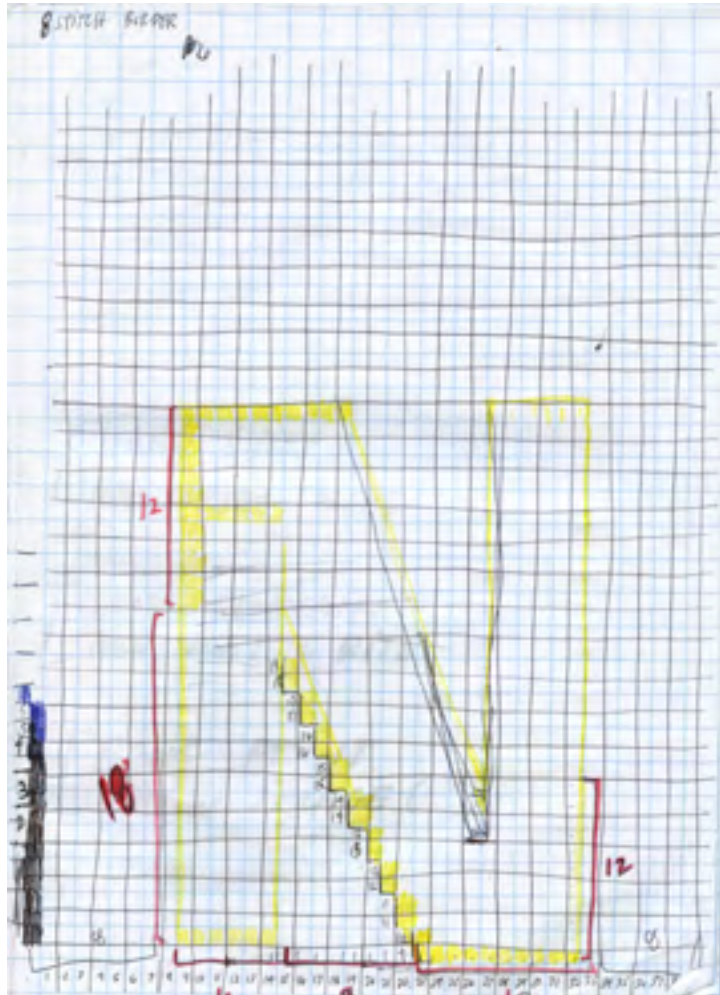
In the beginning, the characters of this text are not named within their respective chapters. These women populate the writing together as “she”s. You are reading this with the understanding that it was written by Lili Huston-Herterich, who is me. I am a woman, North American, English-speaking, white, writing in my early 30s. This is a small part of my orientation. As a reader, when is it important to be provided with this information? How does omitting certain specificities enable, or oppress, the reading experience?

At the end, a section titled *The Many Midwives* reveals what has been omitted from these chapters: the names of people, the lineages of ideas, and the many live encounters from where the texts originated. With these two different ways of handling togetherness, the collection of texts ask:

When is it necessary to acknowledge provenance, and how?

I have been told that writing is fundamentally a “with” project, meaning it is animated *with* a reader and is alive only within this relationship. Making art for me is also a practice *with*. I work across many mediums, but specific kinds of making are foregrounded in these texts because they shared the same temporality. I think through making. While writing, I knitted a scarf and tufted a rug. While writing, I collected socks. While writing, I began to think about making an artwork with my sister. In these texts, I hope to reveal the complex relatedness of my position and work as an artist, and how the question of acknowledgement and disclosure is an ongoing one my practice.

HOW TO START A KNITTED SCARF



sketch for a scarf letter, 2019

When knitting words into a scarf, the letters stack to be read vertically from top to bottom. The knitter begins with the last letter of the word and works backwards. This means that after the completion of each letter, she must remember the preceding one, most easily recalled by reciting the entire word or phrase the scarf will ultimately bear. The moment between letters becomes a recurring affirmation of the determined text. Or, as time passes and the knitter is repeatedly confronted by her decision, it can become a periodic opportunity for diversion. At these moments, she could twist the next letter to steer towards a different word. She could add a comma, making space for a preceding text that will change the context of the already knitted one. She could end halfway through a word, which would make the beginning a middle. To think of the entirety of the text at every completed letter is a confrontation of a wholeness – a completed word, a finished phrase – which is regularly at the mercy of the knitter's decision whether or not to follow its hypothetical orientation. It begs her to stay on course.

Even when she yields to its pleas and the word or phrase finds its completion as knit, the routine confrontation of a possible reorientation becomes habituated in the process of making, embedded in its own temporal present.

"... by attending to what is habitual and routine in 'the what' of the world... we can keep open the possibility of habit changes, without using that possibility to displace our attention to the present, and without simply wishing for new tricks."

(Ahmed, 2007)

HANDS ON A SOFT BELLY



watercolour on printed iPhone drawing, 2019

A sock found on the ground at the port was knit across the ocean, on a machine that was fed spools of dyed wool. The dye, which saturated the strands before they were spun, now colours the current of a nearby river. One of these strands can be unravelled and brushed to look like how it did when it was shaved from a herd of sheep's bodies. And those sheep, indistinguishable from each other in the fibres now brushed from this one strand of wool, are born and reared by mothers, and each mother comes from a lineage of relative sheep before her. And then there is more going backwards, perhaps to when the fence is built around the sheep, making them property. Or, to when the sheep, or their cut hairs, are brought across the ocean. Or, to when the sheep decided to migrate from mountain to valley.

In deciding a beginning, are all the possible antecedents that preceded or contributed to that moment's becoming repressed?

She is a philosopher, and she knows everyone in the large wooden hall is there for her, and her lecture. She faces them and begins to speak an image:

A toddler looks at himself standing on his own two feet in a mirror, while the hand of his mother, which grips his centre and keeps him steady, disappears from his perception of himself.

Speaks an image. The image isn't hers: she attributes it to a psychoanalyst's concept, which can be traced further to the speculations of a psychologist. But in this moment, she speaks this image and by speaking it, inherits it.

I will inherit and write another image:

A toddler looks at herself standing on her own two feet in a mirror, while the hand of her mother, which grips her centre and keeps her steady, disappears from her perception of herself.

This image comes early in her lecture. It contributes to her idea of the myth of the individual – an individual that denies acknowledgement of social bonds and interdependency. “Let us try a different story,” she responds to this inherited spoken image. *Us*, the audience, is with her. “It begins this way. No one is born an individual. If someone becomes an individual over time, he, she, they do not escape the fundamental conditions of dependency in the course of that process. We are, all of us in this room, born into a condition of radical dependency” (Butler, 2018).

This different story, presented thirty-eight minutes and ten seconds into her one-hour lecture, is a fraction of her whole work. It acknowledges the necessary fiction in calling anything a beginning at all. This is now my beginning, which I stitched together from pieces of transcribed text from a video recording of her much longer lecture. By transcribing her spoken words, I make them into a material that I can

handle. “We touch things to assure ourselves of reality. We touch the things we form” (Albers 1965).

In making anything, there is always something left over, I hear someone say on morning radio, during a story about the history of waste. I respond out loud, and also in making anything, something is always needed for it to be made from. The scraps of the woman's words, which are already created from the cuttings of other thinkers' words, I have collected to think something new, inevitably made from something already old.

I will write a new memory,

of myself as a toddler looking at myself standing on my own two feet in a mirror, while the hand of my mother, which grips my centre and keeps me steady, disappears from my perception of myself.

If I let myself grab the philosopher's-from-the-psychoanalyst's-from-the-psychologist's narrative by the pronouns, I can handle them, and weave myself into her image. I see my mother's hands, which I know well – strong fingernails, thin skin draped over knobby bones and soft thick veins. I look at my own hands, with the same thin skin, thick veins, bones. *One cannot assume an ability to transcend her location*, I read in my notebook from a page written a year ago.

I hear these words as an echo of the words of another

woman, a poet, who spoke them to a different audience before I was born. The poet describes an obsession with origins as “a way of stopping time in its tracks”. She says the pursuit of finding a singular end – an origin – denies “continuing actions in the present” (Rich, 2001). I permit myself to handle the philosopher’s words from my specific location as a way of keeping it live and moving. In the process, the remaining 57 minutes of her lecture fall aside for me to work with three minutes of it. These leftovers exist in a complicated impossibility of complete acknowledgement. When is it important to give access to this excess, and when can I permit myself to proceed without it?

Given a piece of cloth, smooth and homogenous, I poke my finger through it. My finger, swollen with a nibbled nail and dry, thin skin draped over knobby knuckles, fits through this hole. Pulling it out, new ends of broken threads are exposed: ends (or beginnings) that can be fondled or tugged, creating long rippled snags in the weave. It is these little joyful holes and disorienting snags that I hope to follow – playful beginnings (or ends) made in a cloth that has an otherwise un-handleable expansiveness.

CHANTS FOR KNITTING

#1

(green)

I am a sister
I am a daughter
I am a lover
I am a friend

(black)

I am a colleague
I am a stranger
I am a customer
I wear a trend

(orange)

I wear a sweater
I wear a trouser
I wear whatever
All those I mend

(red)

Tying together
Bits of small leather
There is a long chain
Of knotted skins!

(switch needles)

ARMPIT KNITTERS



graphite and watercolour drawing on studio wall, 2019

The mother once spent a week with the family of an old boyfriend. She did not speak their language, so she communicated with the man's mother – a could-have-been-grandmother – with her body language. The women used gestures and smiles these wordless days spent together, and the could-have-been-grandmother showed the mother to knit the way she knew how: tucking the right needle under her armpit and using the left to work around it, swapping needles after each row.

Later, the mother taught her two daughters to knit the only way she knew how: under the armpit. Though this technique was prohibitive – there was no possibility to knit circularly, for example, or to use multiple or double-sided needles – the sisters inherited the impediment.

They made long scarves in long car rides, or during long waits in doctors' offices, or in other long stretches of time together with fidgeting hands and running mouths. Whenever the sisters started a scarf, they would recall this could-have-been-grandmother, and they would think of this connection to people who could have not been strangers, and how the difference between stranger and relative is contingent on a tangle of slight circumstances. As they slipped from their world into this other world, time stretched, and their scarves got longer to show this time passing, needles moving in and out from their inherited armpits.

"The unquiet thoughts of the quiet knitting woman."

(possibly Lorde, 2007)

#2

(red)

She worked on painting houses
She worked on painting sets
She worked on days they wanted to
She worked on days they said

(orange)

At home she's painting boxes
At home she's painting clouds
Moody beaches stretch out to
Four corners sanded round

(black)

Weeks off cause us anxiety
Days off we could not think
But despite these sicknesses
On these days we are free

(green)

I come from her and so I know
These feelings that she felt
Struggles so particular
I feel them now myself

(switch needles)

TETHER

The museum, which used to be a factory, tells a proud story of her hometown's industrial history. She feels a part of this history. The building is special to her, because it was the factory where her father and mother worked when she was a child. She is visiting the museum with her grandson.

There are exhibitions of art and other objects, but her grandson is most interested in the old steam engine. She loves this room too. The museum keeps the engine running for display. The pistons slide back and forth on oiled tracks, keeping a ticking rhythm. She remembers her father having to leave the house early in the mornings, before she or her brothers were out of bed, to start this engine.

As her grandson points to parts of the mechanics, another woman in the room with them smiles. The woman is using a video camera that the grandson is curious about. She shows him the picture on the camera. He smiles and then moves on towards the basement, where the museum has staged a fuel room. His grandmother lingers. She notices the woman seems interested, perhaps in a part of her story.

Letting her grandson go ahead, she stays. She tells the woman her father had worked with this machine, and her mother had also studied and worked at the factory. When her parents married, the company agreed to let her mother work from home. These working nights were a victory for



wax pencil on printed image from Tilburg city archives, 2019

her mother, she explains. Not every married woman was able to keep their work. She remembers that metres and metres of fabric would be delivered to their home. She repeats, metres and metres of fabric. Metres and metres.

Was it metres and metres, when the fabric came to her mother? Memories of scale are hard to trust. She certainly remembers the cloth came twice a week in rolls, and that it was heavy. The factory paid her mother, and other women in the town, to darn the mistakes the machines made. These women mended holes, snags, and bumps by hand. They worked mostly at night, after their housework was finished. They were known in the town to make cigarette burns disappear from coats. Because of them, the community's garments lasted through generations: sons would wear the slacks of their fathers, tucked in and pinned for the length. Men would be buried in coats from their wedding night. Daughters let in or out the waists of dresses, finding in the seams needle-hole traces of their sisters', cousins', or mothers' contours.

She doesn't know the woman's language well enough to say all of this. As a child, she wasn't aware of the effect of labour politics on her mother's home work, nor did she have any personal memories of the factory closing – only the stories her town told of lost jobs and broken communities. What she did remember was the cloth, the touch and smell of it, its frontside which was also its backside, the many woven patterns, interrupted by fraying holes that needed mending.

She and her brothers were allowed to sleep in the piles of cloth when it came home, which she is able to tell to the woman. She tells her of the weight of the material on her body that helped put them to sleep. At this moment, she thinks of her grandson in the fuel room, and begins to say goodbye.

At this same moment, the artist remembers heavy wool blankets from her own childhood. Under them, she and her sister would ask their mother to tell the stories of when they were born. These stories that always suspended, or expanded, or compressed time. The thought of the moments of their births were inexplicably abstract. The idea of time existing before them, the idea of one body becoming two, three, the impossibility to remember this kind of tethering – all of this laid the ground for new speculative worlds welcomed at bedtime. She tells the grandmother that she also has memories of large pieces of fabric her mother worked with, in a very different context. She can imagine the weight of a roll of woven wool on a body.

She is trying, through recalling the weight of a blanket, and the familiarity of a working mother and her metres of fabric, to connect to the grandmother's memory.

Both women are trying to find a way to tether to each other's stories, apart in time and specificity. The exchange is less than three minutes, all of which the camera in the room has recorded.

Less than three minutes, she thinks.

#3

(green)

Have I forgotten
In bags I carry
Something under me
Lumps in the carpet

(black)

Too far from home now
No turning back now
Besides, the bus comes
n' my coins are buried

(orange)

Layers of shoddy
Pieces I carry
Must be here somewhere
Right, here you go

(red)

Watching the curbsides
Stretch alongside me
Concrete I know well
Lookin' down, I'm home

(switch needles)

NATURE'S FIGURE OF MIDDAY



watercolour, 2019

She is an artist, and she knows the woman in the video is too. She finds the video because she wants to hear how this woman talks about her practice. A few days before, a friend introduced her to the woman's work, and they sat together searching for images of it on the internet. She feels particular feelings when she sees these images of the woman's sculptures, feelings she wishes she could describe in words. They are deep and still, and as she feels them time stretches out, so that it seems like an entire afternoon is passing, when it's really just minutes. The feelings stretch further, into the night: a kind of familiar melancholy, a hypnotic disorientation, a memory of intimacy. But these aren't the words. She starts the video, thinking she may be able to find the right ones from the words the woman uses herself.

The video is made for an artists' prize, a very famous and important prize, that the woman is nominated to receive. As she watches, she remembered that a friend's mother had once nominated her, the friend, for the same prize. When her friend shared this, they laughed at the humiliation the story brought both of them. This is how distant the woman in the video's reality feels from her own. The woman doesn't seem humiliated by the prospect of winning the prize. The woman seems ready for the prize. She wonders if the woman won the prize in the end. The video is from almost a decade ago, she can tell by how the lamp light washes out the pleats

of a lampshade, and how at the end, when the woman smooths a quilted bedspread, the window light behind her burns its colourful pattern to white at the bed's edge.

She has to restart the video, because she is thinking of her friend, and the way video footage has changed in the past ten years. The video begins again and the woman says, "nature's figure of midday is a model that I've used to try to understand what objects mean for me". The woman is speaking about ready-mades, and the camera is panning from the lamp with the pleated lampshade to a box of vanilla biscuits on a shelf. The video seems to be connecting the woman's personal objects with her ready-made works. She wonders what a ready-made is. Is a found object a ready-made? Is a ready-made always a free object? Could a material be a ready-made? What is it called when an object, or material, is rearranged, or combined with another object, or material?

She works with materials she finds, and treats these materials with care, spending time to unravel them, or wrap them, or clean them, or attach them together. The time she takes working with these materials allows her to think about where they come from, and under what conditions her encounter with them has happened. She is reminded of this particular kind of time – stretchable, generative, touchable – when she looks at images of the woman's artworks online.

She notices she has stopped listening about the woman's ideas of *nature's figure of midday*. She restarts the video from

the beginning again. This time, she realizes with humiliation that the woman isn't talking about *nature's* figure of midday, but *Nietzsche's*. It's that same feeling of humiliation that marks the separation of her reality from the woman's, she thinks. The woman has begun with something – Nietzsche – and she has begun with the woman – not Nietzsche. Her reality is tethered to the woman's telling of a *figure of nature*, ahem sorry *Nietzsche*. She worries this means they cannot share the same reality, in which case she wonders if she has the authority to take words from the woman's mouth at all.

The woman has an accent from an island in the Atlantic that she isn't used to, an accent similar to the one her friend with the prize-nominating mother has. The accent misshapes the words the woman says in her unaccustomed ears. The mistake is funny. She will share this mistake with her friend, she decides. Her friend will find the mistake funny.

She doesn't know *Nietzsche's figure of midday*, but this funniness encourages her to learn about it from the woman, and not pursue it herself. She trusts the woman, carrying this knowledge to her. The woman carries to her a ready-made, in the form of an idea, and in this carrying relieves her from the baggage of its origins. She trusts she doesn't need to hunt down Nietzsche's ideas. She's interested in the woman, and nature, but not Nietzsche.

The video continues to play, and the woman is speaking about how at noon, shadows of objects sit directly underneath them, and are not visible as something separate

from them. She talks about shadows as if they are pictures of objects, and how at the moment of midday the real and the picture are indiscernible from one another. “And this has to do with the separation that there is between people, and the impossibility of completely feeling what someone else feels”, she says. The woman continues and the camera travels from a tube of hand cream in her studio to feathery seeds on the floor, and then to a young child reaching up to take a bag the woman is holding in her hands.

She pauses the video here and wonders if this shot intends to position the woman as a mother. She wonders if this is important for the prize.

The woman speaks from a place of introspection, and she is having trouble following the woman’s thoughts because of this. She restarts the video again, this time with an open document to transcribe the woman’s words onto a page. Perhaps this will help her find the words she is looking for.

But she is distracted from words now, and is thinking about care, about how it is to try to *feel what someone else feels*. She thinks that the *impossibility* the woman speaks of is the same impossibility of finding the words to describe the feelings the woman’s sculptures give her. Something has been shared between her and the woman through the sculptures. If not the “real thing” – the woman’s inner experience – then a shadow of that experience that maintains its shape. She thinks about how shadows shrink and stretch as the day

progresses. A shadow, or a picture of an object, adds extra layers that reveal some conditions and contexts of the object. She likes objects as a method of communication, objects that have been made by someone and then presented to someone else, and thinks about what happens in that transmission. Does a shadow always maintain a shape? What is shrunk or stretched in this transmission?

She begins the video again, this time with the sound off. She notices, for the first time, a moment where the woman shows a bowl to the camera. She clicks to pause. She recognizes the design of this bowl from her own childhood. The bowl has an illustration of bunnies in Victorian clothing at an old-style shoppe, where a bunny shopkeep sits behind a counter. She wonders about the bowl’s origins, and how it binds both her own and the woman’s reality. She almost researches this, but doesn’t. She thinks the woman, who is now paused holding the bowl up to the camera, knows that there must be some intersection with someone else through that bowl. She thinks of her own specificity that has led to her recognition of the bowl. A small moment of midday between the woman and her exists, via this bowl.

She un-pauses the video and keeps the volume muted to watch the woman, mother or not mother, stake claim over the importance of her interiority, and its impossibility. She lets the video play through until its end, watching the camera travel through the woman’s room full of things.

#4

(red)

Old work
New stuff
Old stuff
New work

(orange)

New work
Is old stuff
As old stuff
Is new work

(black)

As new work
Well-paid work
Wear old stuff
Mundane work

(green)

And old work
Unpaid work
Wear new stuff
Groundbreak-work!

(switch needles)

A SITUATED DRIFT

I am confronted with Nietzsche again while reading a particular section of Roland Barthes' *The Preparation of the Novel*. Naturally, I receive Nietzsche, who I still haven't directly read, through another voice. Nietzsche says, through the voice of Barthes, through the translation of Kate Briggs:

“The ego is a plurality of person-like forces, of which now this one, now that one, stands in the foreground and assumes the aspect of the ego; from this vantage-point, it contemplates the other forces, as a subject contemplates an object exterior to himself, an influential and determining outside world. The point of the subject is mobile.” (Barthes, 2011)

Before this moment, Barthes speaks – it is a transcription of a lecture – about taking “fairly crudely” Deleuze's idea of individuation. He says, “I'll be taking [individuation] fairly crudely, as a *direction*: a word that acquires emphasis in relation to what it excludes”. I am familiar with taking ideas crudely, so I'm following this *direction*. He continues on about the self as a weather barometer. Checking my conditions sounds familiar: where I am, who I am with, and who and what I depend on. A barometric routine of understanding myself within a context of relations. I endure weather and also am a kind of weather, if weather is something with a specificity to the becoming of the particular day it happens *with*. A *suchness*. I'm with Barthes.



sketch from an Orion Martin painting called *Midday Lucy Goes To Town On Purpose* for a sculpture called *Princess Winter Goes To Town On Purpose*, 2019

Sorry, I'm wrong. It's not Barthes talking about barometers – or it is, but he is talking about them through Rousseau. Am I with Rousseau? Who is Rousseau? I flip to the back pages. Surprise, I haven't read Rousseau. From what I can gather from the footnotes alone (because hell if I'm letting this book push me out of its pages) Rousseau is a man who has written a book about being a "Solitary Walker". I think about the feminist research collective Precarias a la Deriva and their response to the practice of the Situationist International:

"...[i]n the Situationist version of the drift, the investigators wander without any particular destination through the city, permitting the conversations, interactions and urban micro-events to guide them... In our particular version, we opt to exchange the arbitrary wandering of the flaneur, so particular to the bourgeois male subject with nothing pressing to do, for a situated drift which would move through the daily spaces of each one of us, while maintaining the tactic's multi-sensorial and open character."

(Precarias a la Deriva, 2006)

The point of the subject is mobile. I imagine the kaleidoscopic plurality of Nietzsche's "ego" moves similarly to the subjective situated drift of the "us" of Precarias A La Deriva. In both, there is an individuation – one *person-like force standing in the foreground, one daily space of one of us* – that is made from an interweaving of interior and exterior experiences.

The experience of reading (receiving) Barthes (Nietzsche/Rousseau) involves flipping of pages, re-reading paragraphs, reading out-loud, transcribing sections, taking notes. In

the thick of all of this, I am reminded of a very different experience reading another book, a novel, which I think performs what these men write about.

The Transformation, by Juliana Spahr, has a main character that is three people, referred to throughout as "they". The novel has momentum fuelled by a practice of not-naming: places, people, media references, political figures, plants, animals, and other subjects Spahr refers to as "the island in the Pacific", or "the government that currently occupied the continent", or "the two buildings that fell down", or "those with genealogical ties to the island before the whaling ships came". My experience reading *The Transformation* was an ongoing disorientation that enabled access to a world untethered from the specifics of naming and simultaneously conscious of the collective dependencies and provenances of its subject. Spahr's pluralized subject makes for a sometimes messy, interwoven place where her writing both reveals its own maker and performs her individual undoing. Spahr is, after all, one of the three that make the novel's composite protagonist. The book swept me away.

In its back pages, Spahr writes that *The Transformation* was written under the spell of two other writers, whose sentences she claims were on her mind. My own writing has been written under the spell of *The Transformation*. Her story, which precedes its precedents, is an excitingly present and live fiction. Her subjectivity is performed as a *discontinuous and yet unabrupt mutation of sites* (Barthes' words), and

the reading experience produces a disorientation that I imagine to be not dissimilar to the embodied experience as Nietzsche's mobile subject, *a plurality of person-like forces*.

Every knitter, maker, reader needs a break from their doing to reconnect to an *influential and determining outside world* before returning to their own activity, their disorientation.

I offer this chapter as a break, before we continue with this drift.

#5

(green)

What a wonderful gift
Not to have a canon!
Says the poet smiling
To a mic she doesn't need

(black)

Women called computers
Pose on an iron cannon
They fire it after lunch to
A ticking sea of clocks

(orange)

She tells disgusting facts
On a soft stage (stands the world)
Slip'ry carpet covering
Our work that reproduces

(red)

Self-contamination
Self-adulteration
Quiet written hist'ry of
Ev'ry despised creation

(switch needles)

SLIPS AND DRAG



tufted wool rug in studio, 2019

They are sisters and they know they have a similar way of working. The dancer is on the back porch of her apartment, getting a sunburn on one side of her face from a strong morning sun. The artist just finished dinner, sitting in her kitchen with candles lit. They are talking on a video call. They have the same haircut.

They are thinking about how to make something together. They've made things together before, but have never decided to share the thinking before the making of something. The video shows one face in daylight and the other at night, both with bangs. The different qualities of light, the similar hair, is distracting. The video makes them wonder when it is necessary to acknowledge things like this – different places, different practices, different lineages of where they both as individuals come from, and what they may share. Do they need to talk to each other about being sisters?

The moment feels hard, harder than other times they have talked together, and other times when they have made things. The dancer is talking about slipping on stage or in rehearsal. This break in her choreography can be a generative moment, one she can look onto again and re-perform, or respond to live on stage. A productive slip. It's about exposing something, the other sister says. Evidence of excitement.

They talk about how they both never learned proper patterning, and yet both sew their own clothes. One of them has a book written by a poet who wonders what someone in the future would think upon finding one of the poet's hand-made garments with sloppy seams in a thrift store. *This was not an attentive sewist*, the future thrifter thinks. The poet calls her seams "evidence of excitement" (Boyer, 2015).

This kind of evidence and exposure is different than the acknowledgements of place, practice, or provenance the sisters think about when seeing their images together on video. Where their work comes from – for the dancer, a character, a song, a movement; for the artist, a material, a form, a process – have strong holds on them until a slip opens a possibility for something new. A slip of the body, a slip of the hand, a slip of the tongue – *nature's* (ahem I mean *Nietzsche's*) *figure of midday*. The sister that dances re-performs slips, folding these movements into her dancing. In this way, her process always generates new beginnings.

Is a slip a resistance to a singular end, an insistence in the continuing actions of the present?

Should a re-performed slip carry the spot on the floor where the slip happened, the audience who first witnessed the slip, the jumping heart of the dancer who endured the slip, all of these circumstances of the slip's becoming?

Repeating as a gesture to recollect. Recollection as a transmission. Transmission as transcendence. The sisters

are thinking together about how repeated movements make traces. The decision to insert themselves bodily into repeated movements from the past – earlier in their dance, their day, their scarves, their practice, their personal history – could be called "temporal drag" (Bryan-Wilson, 2012). The sisters can embody these traces through making together, allowing them to temporally rupture their shared present moment.

By 1870, the word drag in theatre slang was used to describe women's clothing worn by men, from the sensation of long skirts dragging on the floor. Car tires drag on asphalt tracks at drag races, leaving rubber traces behind.

The continuity of a slip re-performed for an audience in a present public releases it from the specificities of its circumstance. It *drags*, tugs backwards, a singular moment to something longer. Although it does not aim to reveal origins, it engages with prior time as an elsewhere, and does not reduce it to a ruin (Freeman, 2000). The origin of the gesture, and the gesture's interdependence to it, is preserved by an embodied practice.

The artist thinks of a drawing she is making in a tufted rug of an illustration of how to braid bread dough. The wool she draws with is weak from having partially rotted. It can't hold a purpose other than being the short fibres a tufted rug is made from. Struggling with the unfamiliar process, her focus throughout is entirely mechanical. Repetitive – thread the gun, tuft a row, thread the gun, tuft a row, change thread,

tuft a row. She finishes, cuts the work down from its frame, flips its right side over, and sees that the drawing has turned atomic, or celestial. A slippage. Threads hang loose from its orbit – a result of her mistaken technique, and an invitation to braid.

Slipping on a soft floor, on piles of clothes, on a loose rug, in a bedroom or a dressing room or an exploded thrift store or a garbage dump or a dream. An unsteady ground, a toddler's wobble, a tugged piece of cloth, a tear, an industrial snag, a frayed edge –

A disorientation.

#6
(Tip Her)

(red)

Resuscitation
Resissiation
Remussination
Memuscitation

(orange)

Memisteration
Messisteration
Menicisation
My Sister Station

(black)

My Sister Nation
Mesissedation
Messisleration
A Mess Sedation

(green)

Resisterration
Re Sister Ation
Residuation
Remuneration

(switch needles)

UNTIL THE END, MY DEAR



watercolour study of costume design by Nicholas Roerich, 2019

She is a virgin, and she knows she was chosen to dance alone. It happens in the mountains with the other women while divining the future. Dancing at dusk, they are a sight for the sore eyes of wandering travellers and shepherds who can't help but join their circle. The women, superhuman in their stamina, are difficult to keep up with, and their guests collapse after letting the dance exhaust them. This evening, she feels a weariness with these guests. The first time she slips, the others pull her up by her armpits, brush the dirt off her arms, and continue. The second time, they stop entirely. She had been chosen, they know.

Now, she stands alone and her village surrounds her. It is later in the night. They were taught the dance she will perform by a 300-year old woman as a dance to warm the earth. Since their beginning, the dance was never danced alone. She will be the first to do so. Her dance is for the village and for a second audience, beyond the trees. This audience is shouting, she hears. This audience is rioting.

There is an orchestra. Alternating between tipped-toes and flat feet, she begins to bounce while the villagers step to marching drums. Suddenly, she lurches up with the strings, arms upright. She begins to jump. With each moment of verticality her knees fold and her heels touch her backside. She is barefoot, and dirt kicks upwards towards her head. She continues, keeping time with a beating drum, until she

needs a break. In her stillness her legs quiver. She feels the warmth of the earth already. When the melody begins again, her leaping continues. She can still hear the commotion of the audience beyond the forest.

What was at first a strained exertion has now become routine. She lands after every jump with familiar footing. She knows there is no end to this dance. She takes another break – a cue for the villagers to spring upwards and dance for her until she begins again. She rises, and they fall. She stops, and they continue. These interwoven rhythms alternate, interrupting a unified progress-time. The earth becomes warmer. Her breaks become fewer.

She continues, and there is no breaking now. She is making a mark in the hot earth. She thinks of sand drawings photographed from airplanes, possibly made by ritual walking or dancing ceremonies from over a thousand years ago. She is reminded of a word for *whirlwind* in a different language, which in the same language is also the word for *caterpillar*.

"The whirlwind is a cocoon; a cocoon is transformation; whirlwinds are the souls of the newly-dead ascending; shamans ride on whirlwinds; the way out of the world, or into another world, is through the vortex." (Weinberger, 2007)

Cocoon is an inside, whirlwind is an outside. She is mixing stories, she thinks. She can't stop dancing and can no longer see the villagers. She still hears the riot beyond the trees.

It is louder, angrier. They are drumming on each other's heads.

She understands now they are rioting for an end.

THE MANY MIDWIVES

Referring to references as “midwives” is an inherited practice from Anna Tsing (Tsing, 2009).

There’s No Such Thing as a Baby, She Says

This “she” is **Kate Briggs**, who has been the primary support for the writing of these texts. In a studio visit in Rotterdam in February, Kate told me someone else said *there’s no such thing as a baby*. She told me that if this phrase worked for me to *run with it*. All I remembered was that the person who said it originally was someone with a flourished surname, but through retroactive research I found him: **Donald Winnicott**. Kate’s engagement with this text’s becoming has been indispensable, so I intend for the first moment of it – the title – to indicate her influence.

How to Start a Knitted Scarf

The thinking about orientation, and the quote at the end of this section, is from **Sarah Ahmed**’s essay ‘A phenomenology of whiteness’. I gleaned this essay from a presentation by writer **Catherine Gander** at a conference called *Gestures: Writing that Moves* at the University of Manchester in February 2019. It became an important part of my thinking through what I had written after I had written it, alongside critical and essential feedback by **Laurie Kang**.

Hands on a Soft Belly

The found sock was found at a pier in the Port of Rotterdam, and its fiction was written under the spell of **Astrida Neimanis**’ ‘Hydrofeminism: Or, On Becoming a Body of Water’ (2012).

Judith Butler delivered her three-part lecture series 'My Life, Your Life: Equality and the Philosophy of Non-Violence' at Bute Hall in the University of Glasgow from 1–3 October 2018. **Bobby Sayers** quoted from it during a presentation at the Piet Zwart Institute, and later shared with me the links to watch recordings of it online. The quote on touching is from **Anni Albers'** *On Weaving*, on tactile sensibility. I was reminded of Albers' words in a studio visit with **Renée Turner**. The radio playing that morning was BBC Radio 1, but I can't recall the program. Notes in my sketchbook from a **Nina Wakeford** seminar in the winter of 2018 told me *I could not assume an ability to transcend my location*, and I am assuming that these words were hers. I recalled them when reading **Adrienne Rich's** 'Notes toward a Politics of Location' (1984), who is the poet. I read this essay in a dog-eared copy of *Arts of the Possible* lent to me by Kate Briggs.

Chant for Knitting #1

This chant was originally based on the words of the poem 'Forgetting' by **Suzanne Lacy**. Her book *Leaving Art* was recommended to me by **Vivian Sky Rehberg**. The first chapter I read from it, 'The Bag Lady: On Memory', I chose because of its closeness to the title of my favourite **Erykah Badu** song Bag Lady. Later, I watched **Agnés Varda's** film *Les glaneurs et la glaneuse* (*The Gleaners and I*), and rewrote parts of this chant in the film's aftertaste. I was introduced to the film by **Emily Smit-Dick's** MFA thesis for the Glasgow School of Art.

Armpit Knitters

This is a story written about my mother **Meg Huston**. The unquiet thoughts of a knitting woman is a quote I thought was from an **Audre Lorde** text, but I can't find it again, so can't be sure.

Chant for Knitting #2

This chant is written for about my mother and two of the many types of works she does.

Tether

The woman who is the daughter of two factory workers is named **Annette**. The factory museum she is visiting with her grandson is the TextielMuseum Tilburg in the Netherlands. Annette grew up in Tilburg, and now lives in Den Bosch. This is as much as I know about her. The video camera that captured our conversation was borrowed from artist and friend **Nick Thomas** to shoot a video work called *The Whole Roach*. Much of the historical details of this story were informed by the photographic city archive of Tilburg, and from an ethnographic collection of interviews in the TextielMuseum library called *De ondergang van de Tilburgse textielindustrie, 1945-1980*. The image of needle-hole traces hidden in seams are borrowed from a lecture with **Amy de la Haye** and **Carolyn Steedman** during the 'Im/Material: Encounters within the Creative Arts Archive' conference at the University of the Arts London in May 2016, recommended to me by **Renée Turner**.

Nature's Figure of Midday

Lukas Meßner visited my studio after I had made a quilted puppet. He was reminded of the work of **Cathy Wilkes**, who we googled together. Wilkes was nominated for the Turner Prize in 2008, and the Tate made a video interview on the occasion of her nomination. Wilkes has an Irish accent, but **Collette Rayner** has a Scottish one. Collette's mother (in a gesture of purest support) once nominated her for the Turner Prize, on the first year in the prize's history that nominations were open to the public.

A Situated Drift

After reading a late draft of this project, **Kate Briggs** recommended *Barthes' Preparation of the Novel* (2011), which I had to borrow from **Lukas Meßner** because she had recommended it to him as well. I was introduced to **Precarias a la Deriva's** 'A Very Careful Strike' (2006) during a reading group with **Letters & Handshakes**, the collaboration of **Greig de Peuter** and **Christine Shaw**, at Gallery TPW in Toronto in 2017. **Tor Jonsson** introduced me to **Juliana Spahr's** poem *This connection of everyone with lungs* (2005), which I was so moved by that I gave my mother a copy for Christmas in 2018. While completing the online purchase, an algorithm recommended Spahr's *The Transformation* (2007).

Chants for Knitting #5

This chant was written from a transcription of an interview with poet **Anne Boyer** at Multimedijalni institute MAMA in Zagreb, Croatia. In the interview she is asked: "How do you see the politics of literature and poetic texts... in relation to the private and public, and individual and collective experience?" Boyer responds, "Private subjects are created out of the public – the world makes us... and then it says we are not supposed to talk about what's been made... because what is private is unutterable, is disgusting, is abject."

The women called computers worked at the **Bidston Observatory** in Liverpool, UK, when it was used for research in the Earth Sciences. At one point, clocks for ships were engineered there, and it also fired a one o'clock cannon for merchant ships' clock calibrations on the nearby sea. This history was shared with me by **Fi Jones**, who now runs an artistic research centre there with **Kim Ward** and **Edward Clive**.

Until the End, My Dear

Igor Stravinski's *Le Sacre du Printemps* premiered at Paris' Théâtre des Champs-Élysées on May 29, 1913 to a rioting audience. The "virgin" is a combination of the sacrificed virgin from the plot of Stravinski's ballet, the same character choreographed by **Pina Bausch** in 1975, and a **Samodiva** – a wood nymph from Bulgarian folklore who was the subject of a collaborative research trip and residency in Sofia with artist **Merve Kılıçer**. Our shared knowledge of the Samodiva was constructed with research in the National Library of Bulgaria in Sofia, as well as stories told by Den Haag-based singer **Viktorija Nikolova**. The title comes from the answer to a question producer **Sergei Diaghilev** asked Stravinsky upon hearing his score:

"[He] didn't want to offend me, so he asked me only one thing - which was very offensive. He asked me, "Will it last a very long time, this way? and I said, "Until the end, my dear." And he was silent, because he understood that the answer was serious."

(wasaexpress 2013)

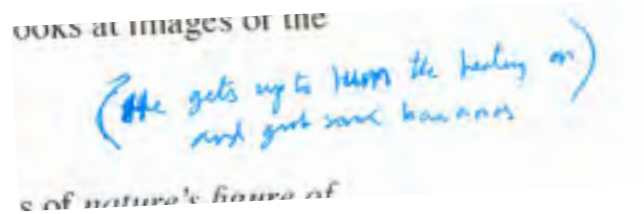
Niels Bekkema shared with me an excerpt about Nazca sand drawings from **Eliot Weinberger's** *An Elemental Thing* (2007), a book I had circumstantially already been reading upon the recommendation of either **Kate Briggs**, or **Mike Sperlinger**. Weinberger has also provided the connection of the words whirlwind and cocoon in Arapaho, the language of the Indigenous people from the region that is now called the American Northwest.

Slips and Drag

Aria Delanoche is the dancer who slips. I've made the woollen celestial tufted rug. The thinking around temporal drag is continued from **Elizabeth Freeman's** use of the term in "Packing

History, Count(er)ing Generations” (2000), which I found through **Julia Bryan-Wilson’s** “Practicing Trio A” (2012), which was shared with me by **Kate Briggs** in 2018. The etymology for the word drag was found on www.etymonline.com.

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